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graphics accelerator

Last modified: Friday, January 18, 2002

A type of video adapter that contains its own processor to boost performance levels. These processors are specialized for computing graphical transformations, so they achieve better results than the general-purpose CPU used by the computer. In addition, they free up the computer's CPU to execute other commands while the graphics accelerator is handling graphics computations.

The popularity of graphical applications, and especially multimedia applications, has made graphics accelerators not only a common enhancement, but a necessity. Most computer manufacturers now bundle a graphics accelerator with their mid-range and high-end systems.

Aside from the graphics processor used, the other characteristics that

differentiate graphics accelerators are:

- **memory** : Graphics accelerators have their own memory, which is reserved for storing graphical representations. The amount of memory determines how much resolution and how many colors can be displayed. Some accelerators use conventional DRAM, but others use a special type of video RAM (VRAM), which enables both the video circuitry and the processor to simultaneously access the memory.
- **bus** : Each graphics accelerator is designed for a particular type of video bus. As of 1995, most are designed for the PCI bus.
- **register** width: The wider the register, the more data the processor can manipulate with each instruction. 64-bit accelerators are already becoming common, and we can expect 128-bit accelerators in the near future.

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3D Video Acceleration
Describes some of the concepts involved in 3D video, as well as the issues related to the new 3D accelerators on the market. This page is from "The PC Guide."

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Guide to 3D graphics cards
This TechTools article provides a comprehensive hands-on guide to 3D graphics cards, including how they work, a shopper's guide, performance and testing information, and list of 3D games.

Number Nine Visual Technology
Home page for Number Nine Visual Technology, designer and supplier of high-performance visual technology solutions, including video and graphics accelerators 128-bit graphics chips, display control software, and high-performance software drivers.

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